

Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month



Tsung Dao Lee

Physicist; born in Shanghai, China. He fled Japanese invaders to study at the National Southwest University in Kunming (1945), where he first met his friend and later colleague, Chen Ning Yang. Lee came to the U.S.A. in 1946 when he was awarded a scholarship to the University of Chicago. He joined the University of California: Berkeley (1950--51), moved to the Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS), Princeton, N.J. (1951--53), then went to Columbia University (1953), becoming, at age 29, their youngest full professor (1956--60). While at Columbia in the early 1950s, Lee worked jointly with Yang, then at IAS, to challenge and disprove the seemingly irrefutable parity conservation principle that subatomic particles and their mirror images obey the same physical laws. This revolutionary achievement won Lee and Yang the 1957 Nobel Prize in physics. Lee returned to IAS (1960--63), then continued his research at Columbia (1963) to further investigate parity nonconservation, relativity, creation of superdense matter (1974), statistical mechanics, and gravity. A humble and reserved scientist, he stated that thinking left him no time for hobbies.